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SUBJECT: DAILY SUMMARY OF JAPANESE PRESS 07/17/08

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ARTICLES:

- (1) Poll on North Korea delisting

MAINICHI (Page 2) (Full)  
June 16, 2008

Questions & Answers

(T = total; P = previous; M = male; F = female)

Q: North Korea has now declared its nuclear programs, and the United States will delist North Korea as a state sponsor of terrorism. The Japanese government welcomes this move as helping resolve the North Korean nuclear issue. Do you support this stance?

T P M F  
Yes 19 22 17  
No 66 69 64

Q: Do you think the issue of Japanese nationals abducted to North Korea is nearing a resolution with the U.S. delisting North Korea as a state sponsor of terrorism?

T P M F  
Nearing resolution 2 3 2  
Far off 47 52 43

(Note) Figures shown in percentage, rounded off. "No answer" omitted.

Polling methodology: The survey was conducted July 12-13 over the telephone across the nation on a computer-aided random digit sampling (RDS) basis. Answers were obtained from 1,060 persons.

(2) Seiron column: Delisting of North Korea from U.S. list of state sponsors of terrorism; Realistic military measures should be taken into consideration

SANKEI (Page 13) (Full)

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July 16, 2008

Former Ambassador to Thailand Hisahiko Okazaki

It may be premature to discuss the results of the latest six-party talks at this state.

One reason for that is because all observers are in agreement that North Korea's nuclear report is not complete. There is no consensus reached on a method of verifying the credibility of the report. Whether the U.S. will actually remove that country from its list of state sponsors of terrorism will not be known until August 11.

Another reason is that outsiders cannot tell what will result from a reinvestigation into the abduction issue, which North Korea has promised Japan. If the abduction issue makes major progress, it would change the evaluation of the U.S. decision to remove North Korea from its terror-sponsoring list.

I have formed my own conclusions about North Korea's foreign policy by observing the talks between the U.S. and North Korea since 1994. The DPRK has the capability of negotiating by giving in on terms piecemeal and then implementing them.

As a result of the talks in 1994, the nation suspended operations at its nuclear facilities in Yongbyon in return for receiving 500,000 tons of heavy oil annually and having light-water nuclear reactors built. It has been properly abiding by this pledge for the past six years. In the 1999 talks, it pledged to put on hold the launching of Taepodong missiles in return for a resumption of humanitarian aid and has fulfilled that pledge.

This means that North Korea can make a deal piecemeal in return for receiving economic aid, assuming the condition is to place a temporary moratorium on the use of nuclear facilities or the launching of missiles, instead of abandoning them completely. However, it is not known whether North Korea is ready to make permanent deals, instead of just making piecemeal concessions.

Disabling Yongbyong facilities for about a year

The U.S. has been able to accomplish the disabling of Yongbyong facilities the decisions reached under the Six-Party talks. I hear that the point of contention at the talks was whether North Korea

would agree to disable its nuclear facilities to a degree that would require a year for it to resume operations.

The U.S. has explained that the disabling of nuclear facilities by North Korea is aimed at the future abolition of such. However, scrapping those facilities is a long way off. The situation will not change.

If that is the case, the concession made by North Korea would be to disable its nuclear facilities to a degree that would take about one year before they could be restarted. If one considers experience of the Perry negotiations (1994, 1999), assuming that the (latest) talks were aimed just to achieve just that one goal (disabling to the extent that it would take a year to restart), I think it could probably have been achieved just by the lifting of the freeze on the DPRK's bank account at Banco Delta Asia.

However, only rescissible economic benefits were in fact provided as  
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a result of the Perry talks. This time, however, the Six-Party Talks paid a higher price than that in order to make North Korea commit itself to disabling its nuclear facilities to a certain extent, while putting on hold various allegations, such as counterfeiting money.

There is only one way to justify such a seemingly excessive concession. As the U.S. government has actually conceded, it is telling North Korea that the concessions it just made are only the first step toward a total elimination of its nuclear programs.

This is the point where my view differs from that of the U.S. State Department. I am highly skeptical whether North Korea, which in effect declared with its nuclear test in 2006 that it is now a nuclear power, will abandon such weapons. I harbor doubts about repeatedly making concessions in the hope that North Korea will eventually scrap all its nuclear weapons.

Insufficient talks among allies

The U.S. and its allies have successively made concessions, just as North Korea desired, including the unfreezing of its account at Banco Delta Asia, delisting it from the U.S. list of state sponsors of terrorism, and no longer applying the Trading with the Enemy Act to it. What else is left to the U.S. as a bargaining chip that North Korea might consider valuable enough to convince it to completely abandon its nuclear program? Will North Korea appreciate paper concessions without substance, such as a peace treaty or a security guarantee?

What might be done, if the prospect were obtained that North Korea would not abandon its nuclear programs? One answer might be to continue to call that nation a part of the "axis of evil" or "outpost for tyranny", as did the Bush administration's policy and wait for its self-destruction.

Or, carrots and sticks could be used to a maximum extent. It appears that the harsh response of Japan and the U.S. to its nuclear test in 2006 appears to have dealt a significant blow to the DPRK. What would have happened if the sanctions had continued for a few more years? Doubt still remains that the U.S. might have prematurely tried to reap the benefit of the talks without consultations with its allies.

If that is the case, the only available way would be continuing to strengthen pressure, while crafting a realistic military response with an eye on the possibility of North Korea's arming itself with nuclear weapons.

It is a glaring fact that the six-party talks this time -- in effect, U.S.-China talks and U.S.-North Korea talks -- lacked sufficient prior consultations among U.S. allies. If the forum of the six-party talks is to be continued, this is a serious challenge to deal with.

North Korea's completely abandoning its nuclear weapons is the

minimum condition for making the six-party talks a permanent forum. It is simply weird for North Korea, a de facto nuclear nation, to be a member of the six-party talks.

(3) Seiron (Opinion): U.S. delisting decision based on distorted interpretation of domestic law

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SANKEI (Page 13) (Full)  
July 17, 2008

By Tsutomu Nishioka, professor at Tokyo Christian University

The United States government notified Congress on June 26 of its decision to delist North Korea as a state sponsor of terrorism. Prime Minister Fukuda said on June 24: "We should welcome it (the U.S. decision) if it helps resolve the North Korean nuclear issue," stopping short of expressing his opposition to the U.S. decision. Families of abduction victims frequently visited the U.S. starting in 2001 and succeeded in having the U.S. include the abduction issue among the reasons for keeping North Korea on its terror list. Given this, it is natural for the families to express strong disappointment with Prime Minister Fukuda and the Foreign Ministry.

Some critics, though, say that abductee families and supporters are overly dependent on the U.S. Such criticism is based on a misunderstanding. The media played up the news of Washington's delisting decision this time, but in 2003, when the U.S. government added the abductions to the reasons, this news was not prominently taken up. That is why many Japanese people think mistakenly that the U.S. had already included the abductions among the reasons when the North was designated as a sponsor of terrorism in 1988 and later removed the issue from the conditions in response to a request by Pyongyang.

The U.S. is required to refrain from offering economic aid, excluding humanitarian aid, to the countries on its blacklist and to oppose any aid plans by international financial institutions, its investment destinations, for the countries.

To take a certain country off the list, the president needs to submit to Congress a report that can show that the nation: (1) did not offer support for international terrorist groups over the past six months; and (2) guarantees that it will not offer support in the future. The delisting decision goes into effect 45 days after the submission of the report.

The U.S. designated North Korea as a state sponsor of terrorism in 1988 for such reasons as the incident of the bombing of a KAL airliner the previous year. The first case of an abduction recognized by the Japanese government occurred in 1977, but the U.S. State Department never cited the abductions as a reason for designating North Korea as a sponsor of terrorism in annual reports on international terrorism submitted by the Department to the Congress -- at least it did not until 2003, when abductee families called for the U.S. government's help in resolving the issue.

The idea of delisting North Korea surfaced suddenly in 2000. At that time, there was a movement for the Asian Development Bank to extend loans to North Korea under the lead of South Korea. To join the movement, the U.S. needed to take the North off the list. In a move to delist that nation, the Clinton administration even issued a joint antiterrorism declaration with Pyongyang. This move was suddenly suspended with the launching of the Bush administration. Seeing that, abductee families and supporters, including this writer, began efforts in 2001 to persuade the U.S. to include the abductions among the reasons for listing North Korea as a terrorism sponsor.

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The U.S. State Department defines "a terrorist act" as "a violent act against civilians by a group under a state government or by

agents, based on systematic and political motives and also an intention to affect ordinary people." Based on the definition, North Korea's past abductions of Japanese nationals are naturally labeled as "a terrorist act."

The problem is that a series of abductions occurred from the late 1970s through the early 1980s, and no case has been reported recently that would meet the condition of "within six months" after the series of abductions. When considering the fact that many abduction victims have yet to be returned to Japan, however, it can be even interpreted that the terrorist act is still going on. Based on this view, Japan has continued to urge the U.S. to properly apply its relevant law, emphasizing that the abductions are still an ongoing terrorist act.

In response to Japan's repeated request, Deputy Secretary of State Armitage clearly said: "The abduction issue should be one of the reasons for designating North Korea as a state sponsor of terrorism," during his confirmation hearing at the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in February 2003 and when he met in March the same year with representatives from Association of the Families of Victims Kidnapped by North Korea, the National Association for the Rescuing of Japanese Kidnapped by North Korea, and the group of Diet members dealing with the abduction issue. He referred to the abduction issue in the report on international terrorism released in April 2004. Although some newspapers have insisted that the U.S. government has made no other pledges than just saying it would "consider it," their assertion is not correct.

But under Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, the Bush administration changed its policy and began to say that a solution of the abduction issue is not a precondition for delisting Pyongyang under U.S. law. The U.S. notified Congress of its delisting decision by revising its interpretation of domestic law not for the sake of Japan, a U.S. ally, but for the sake of North Korea, a sponsor of terrorism. That is why many Japanese are seriously concerned that the foundation of the Japan-U.S. alliance has been undermined.

(4) LDP members expect cabinet shuffle before extra Diet session;  
Prime Minister Fukuda has not unveiled real intention

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 2) (Full)  
July 17, 2008

With the closing of the Group of Eight (G-8) summit in Hokkaido, the primary concern in the capital district of Nagatacho is a shuffle of the cabinet and the leadership of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP). The prevailing view in the ruling parties is that Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda will shuffle his cabinet in late August before the opening of an extraordinary Diet session. Fukuda has, however, reiterated that he has no plans to do so. Since even senior ruling coalition members cannot predict the timing and the scale of a shuffle, confusion is spreading across the ruling coalition.

Since the close of the G-8 summit, opinion in the ruling camp has been that Fukuda will shuffle his cabinet at an early date in a bid to form one that could be called his own.

It is not realistic to carry out a shuffle after an extra Diet session is convened. The expectation is that the extra session will

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run until December. An ordinary session will be convened early next year. The term of the House of Representatives will expire in September next year. Given this timeline, the dominant view in the ruling camp is that this will be the last chance for the prime minister to shuffle his cabinet.

The Fukuda cabinet's approval ratings increased slightly in recent opinion polls, with no boost coming from the G-8 summit as Fukuda had hoped. This has strengthened speculation that Fukuda has no choice but to shuffle his cabinet in order to boost his administration's popularity.

Fukuda, however, has not clarified his intention, just saying: "I will consider what I should consider." He then started his summer

vacation yesterday.

Fukuda has not shared his innermost thoughts even with former Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori, Fukuda's backer. Mori has complained that Fukuda is noncommittal when receiving Mori's advice. A senior LDP member sighed as he said: "Nobody has heard from the prime minister as to whether he will shuffle his cabinet or not."

With nobody able to read Fukuda, talk continues within the LDP on the timing and extent of a cabinet shuffle.

LDP Diet Affairs Committee Chairman Tadamori Oshima on July 15 advised Fukuda to shuffle the cabinet soon, saying: "If you shuffle the cabinet, it will be essential for you to ask new cabinet ministers to be ready for posts." A mid-level LDP lawmaker said: "If a small number of cabinet members are replaced, it will be possible to carry out a shuffle immediately before the opening of the extra Diet session."

However, many LDP members favor a major shuffle. A senior New Komeito member said: "It should be a major shuffle or none at all. A minor shuffle would be the worst." An LDP faction chief stressed: "I will obtain one of the four executive posts."

(5) Editorial: We are concerned about the skewed organizational logic in Defense Ministry reform

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 5) (Full)  
July 17, 2008

Organizational logic seems to be overshadowing the starting point of preventing a recurrence of misconducts by Defense Ministry officials. A report compiled by the government's Council on Reform of the Ministry of Defense (MOD) gives us a strong feeling that the focus of attention in the discussion has shifted before we were even aware of it. Can this approach really revitalize the ministry?

MOD was hit by a series of scandals last year, including a bribery case involving former Administrative Vice-Defense Minister Takemasa Moriya and a cover-up of the underreported amount of fuel Japan supplied to a U.S. supply vessel. Because serious doubts have emerged about how civilian control should be carried out, the reform council was launched to write prescriptions under the lead of the Prime Minister's Official Residence (Kantei).

The report consists of two parts: examinations of the scandals and specific proposals. Condemning the Moriya scandal over defense equipment procurement as a breach of trust, the report includes

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measures for increasing transparency in procurement by such means as producing and disclosing conference minutes.

It also calls for the strict observance of regulations and the establishment of professionalism to change the mentality of SDF personnel. The need to specify such basics tells the seriousness of the matter. There is no denying that the policy to deal with scandals is designed to please everyone.

The part on organizational reform is superficial.

The report is designed to consolidate the operation of units and defense capability buildup functions, while generally keeping the overall framework of the Joint Staff Office and the staff offices of the three SDF forces intact. To eliminate sectionalism, the council has also come up with a plan to establish some mixed units of personnel from both civilian and uniformed staff and to strengthen the functions of the control tower of the prime minister and the defense minister.

Aiming at the strict enforcement of civilian control not by civilian officers but by lawmakers is understandable. But how this would lead to the elimination of misconduct remains unclear. It also bothers us that the council's interest has shifted to organizational reform from around the time when Defense Minister Shigeru Ishiba proposed a large-scale restructuring plan.

Since then, there have been clashes of interests between the civilian and uniformed groups who desperately want to defend their authority. As the tug-of-war in the ministry has intensified, self-reflection of the misconducts seems to have been left behind. A council member raised a question about the pitched battle for tampering with the reorganization.

It would be preposterous if reform from the people's perspective became reform from the MOD's viewpoint.

Although the council has produced its report, the past scandals will not vanish like smoke. The public's eye on the ministry remains severe. Defense Minister Ishiba will reportedly set up a team later this week tasked with crafting concrete plans. Unless MOD presents convincing reform plans, it will never be able to restore public trust.

(6) Letters to the editor

Maher's remarks ignore Okinawa public

RYUKYU SHIMPO (Page 5) (Full)  
July 17, 2008

By Takatoshi Oshiro, 70, Tomigusuku City

I believe many people in Okinawa found the Ryukyu Shimpō's July 13 editorial critical of Maher's comments quite agreeable. U.S. Consul General in Okinawa Kevin Maher has made various comments offensive to the people of Okinawa regarding the reversed positions of the ruling and opposition blocs in the prefectural assembly, a Futenma Air Station noise suit and other matters.

Nevertheless, he is a U.S. government spokesperson. His past statements have simply exposed the facts that there are issues and

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that he has an unusual personality. The problem here is the U.S. government's stance.

It is said that U.S. politics is based on popular will. U.S. senators and representatives value the voices of people of their constituencies. Their eyes are not directed at their parties or the president. It is the foundation of democratic politics.

But when it comes to matters of other countries, their minds do not work the same way. They carry things out in defiance of how the people of Okinawa think. But they can probably no longer ignore the Okinawa public's persistent resistance movement.

Consul general's remarks incomprehensible

By Tetsuhiko Minamoto, 61, Tokashiki Village

Making provocative remarks often, Maher has rubbed the feelings of the Okinawa public the wrong way. It is like fingernails across a blackboard. U.S. Consul General in Okinawa Kevin Maher is truly an interesting person. He has a nice face, but what he says is totally incomprehensible. He is either misunderstanding the times, or his watch runs backwards.

Aircraft landing at and taking off from Futenma Air Station always fly over residential areas. Even former Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld described the situation as "too dangerous" in amazement. In other words, it would be impossible to build a base in such a place in the United States.

Consul General Maher said: "The question is why the city has allowed the construction of houses outside the base near its runway."

To us, the big question is why the airfield sits in the middle of Ginowan.

The logic presumably is that it is dangerous to build houses near the airfield, which was there first. Maher's view is the same as the

approach-to-danger argument, which is illogical. The base needs to get out of Okinawa.

(By Magiri Yafuso)

Dear Governor Nakaima:

Relocating the residents who live around the base is the best way to eliminate the danger of Futenma Air Station.

Best,

U.S. Consul-General Kevin Maher

(7) WTO ministerial to start from July 21: What will come after concessions?

ASAHI (Page 6) (Full)  
July 17, 2008

A ministerial of the multilateral trade liberalization talks (Doha Round) of the World Trade Organization (WTO) will be held in Geneva starting on July 21. Many observers are of the opinion that there is a fifty-fifty chance of the meeting reaching an agreement on trade

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liberalization. In order to wrap up an agreement, it would be unavoidable for Japan to make concessions to a certain degree. In the agricultural area, there is a possibility of farm products other than rice being affected by the outcome of the ministerial.

Increase in imports unavoidable

Rice

Former Agriculture Minister Yoshio Yatsu, a key member of the farm policy clique (norin-zoku) in the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), spoke at a gathering in Hirakawa-cho, Tokyo July 16 about how to handle the WTO ministerial: "I think Japan should walk out of the WTO, (if the ministerial comes up with a decision disadvantageous to it)." The audience of about 1,000 people applauded his words. About 1.4 million farm households are a major support base for the ruling parties. How to treat rice is a major issue at the Doha Round.

As a result of the Uruguay Round, the WTO adopted a tariff formula for rice. At present a 778 PERCENT tariff is imposed on that commodity by Japan. Discussions at the Doha Round are focusing on lowering tariffs on agricultural products. It would be difficult for Japan to reject tariff cuts, if it wants to see the Doha Round reach common ground. Since protecting domestic agriculture is a common issue for WTO member nations, the proposal by the chair of the agricultural negotiations group provides key items on which high tariffs can be imposed.

However, even if rice is designated as a key item, Japan would be urged to increase its imports. The chair's proposal calls for imports of 3 PERCENT -6 PERCENT of domestic consumption, according to tariff rates reduced. Japan imports approximately 770,000 tons of rice from abroad as minimum-access rice (MA rice). Since Japan's rice consumption is approximately 8.28 million tons, it would have to increase rice imports by 250,000 tons to 500,000 tons. The MA rice is used for food processing or as foreign aid. Only about 10 PERCENT is used as a food staple. However, a person in charge at the JA Zenchu views that if rice imports increase and some portions are put on the market, pressure would build to lower rice prices.

Concern about being unable to protect key items that can be treated as exception

Rice is not the only agricultural item that becomes an issue in negotiations. Regarding key items, which can be treated as exception, the chairman proposed that 4 PERCENT -6 PERCENT of all food items be treated as key items, but Japan is insisting on 10 PERCENT -15 PERCENT. If Japan is to give in, sugar and starch will likely be targeted.



Regarding designated tariff quota items, free or lower tariff rates can be applied within the designated quota, but higher tariff rates are applied for imports exceeding this quota. According to the proposal made by chairman of the agricultural negotiations group, items that are not designated as such cannot be designated as key items. Among Japan's main high tariff agricultural products, sugar and starch can be categorized as such items. A source related to an agricultural cooperative said, "If Japan cannot give in on rice or wheat, then it may have to give up maintaining those items as key items."

President Arizuka (76) of the Kawanishi Agricultural Cooperative in

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Obihiro City noted, "Prime Minister Fukuda has committed himself to raising Japan's food self-sufficiency ratio. I believe politics will tackle this issue properly."

ZUMWALT